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## VISION

FOCUSING  
OUR FUTURE

**Western**  
**Carolina**  
UNIVERSITY





# THE STRATEGIC PLAN

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ENDORSED BY THE WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

JUNE 8, 2012

## OUR MISSION (WHO WE ARE)

To improve individual lives and enhance economic and community development in our region, state, and nation through engaged learning opportunities in our academic programs, educational outreach, research, and creative and cultural activities.

## OUR CORE VALUES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES (WHAT GUIDES AND INSPIRES US)

- Excellence in scholarship, teaching, and learning
- Collaboration with and respect for our communities
- Free and open interchange of ideas
- Responsible stewardship and organizational effectiveness
- Organizational and environmental sustainability
- Cultural diversity and equal opportunity

## OUR VISION STATEMENT (WHO WE WANT TO BE)

To be a national model for student learning and engagement that embraces its responsibilities as a regionally engaged university.





## 2020 VISION: FOCUSING OUR FUTURE

At the opening of the 2011 fall semester, I announced that development of a new strategic plan would be a top priority for the first year of my administration as chancellor of Western Carolina University. In the 10 months that followed, the 2020 Commission, with 36 representatives from across the campus and from the broader external community, guided the process of formulating a strategic plan that articulates a shared vision for the University, one that reaffirms our collective commitment to excellence, student success, and external focus and engagement.

The 2020 Commission solicited input at seven open community forums from Asheville to Murphy; during numerous campus conversations with faculty, staff, and students; and through an online form on the strategic planning website. With those campus and community ideas providing a solid foundation, the Commission drafted six overall strategic directions for the campus and oversaw the work of six subcommittees charged with proposing specific goals and initiatives for each direction.

After additional fine-tuning and further public input, the Commission distilled a core vision and a final set of strategic directions, goals, and initiatives into Western Carolina's strategic plan, 2020 Vision: Focusing Our Future, which will serve as our road map for the coming years. This report includes a summary of that road map, as well as the plan in its entirety.

The course charted by our strategic plan is ambitious, but it is achievable. The plan, while built upon the institution's strengths and traditions, is forward-looking. 2020 Vision: Focusing Our Future will guide the entire Western Carolina University community as, together, we define our future in pursuit of distinction.

*David O. Belcher*

David O. Belcher  
Chancellor





FULFILL THE EDUCATIONAL  
NEEDS OF OUR STATE AND REGION

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2020 PLAN STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1

## WCU'S FACULTY, STAFF, AND STUDENTS TOGETHER MAKE THE UNIVERSITY'S ACADEMIC MISSION PARAMOUNT.

Western Carolina University will provide each student a rigorous, relevant curriculum with learning experiences that emphasize knowledge and skills that are durable, flexible, and transferable. WCU will offer educational opportunities that result in graduates who are equipped with the skills necessary for success; who are ready to compete in a challenging, changing, and global environment; and who are prepared to contribute to the intellectual, cultural, and economic development of our region and state.

By 2020, WCU will be acknowledged as the regional educational leader in the creative arts, education of teachers and school personnel, environment and environmental policy, health professions, innovation and technology, and recreation and tourism. All WCU students, regardless of chosen academic program, will be able to integrate information from a variety of sources, solve complex problems, communicate effectively and responsibly, and be engaged citizens in their community and the world.

Recognizing the vital role higher education plays in the region's economy, the University will increase its number of graduates by 25 percent by 2020. WCU will eliminate barriers to student access and success by improving cooperation with public school and community college partners and by securing significant private gifts for merit- and need-based scholarships and financial aid. The University will increase its first-year retention rate to 80 percent and its six-year graduation rate to 60 percent.







ENRICH THE  
TOTAL STUDENT EXPERIENCE

2020 PLAN STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2

EVERY WCU STUDENT’S EXPERIENCE  
REINFORCES HIGH STANDARDS AND  
EXPECTATIONS. INCORPORATES  
MEANINGFUL EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT.  
AND INSTILLS PRIDE IN THE UNIVERSITY.

WCU is committed to the education of its students as citizens who are prepared to contribute to the welfare of our region and state. Our pursuit encompasses both curricular and co-curricular elements to prepare students to be active participants in a vibrant, intellectually, culturally, and economically thriving world.

The University will foster a student-centered campus culture where every academic support and student service unit embraces academic excellence as a point of emphasis. Formal mentoring programs will help students develop a sense of personal, intellectual, and professional identity, while expanded leadership and experiential learning opportunities at the local, regional, national, and international levels for all WCU students will result in graduates poised to become the next generation of leaders.

Western Carolina pledges to build and sustain a high-quality athletics program that excites and instills pride among students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends of the University. Western Carolina will create and sustain campus traditions that strengthen students’ connections to their University and its surrounding communities, including its Cherokee neighbors.





## ENHANCE OUR EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS

2020 PLAN STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3

WCU IS RECOGNIZED AS AN ACTIVE PARTNER WITH THE WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA REGION, ITS COMMUNITIES, ORGANIZATIONS, AND BUSINESSES.

Partnerships with regional businesses and industries, nonprofit and civic organizations, government agencies, communities, and municipalities represent an integral part of WCU's core mission as a regionally engaged institution of higher education. The University's commitment to enhancing external partnerships is demonstrated by its emphasis on integrated learning experiences, commitment to engaged scholarship, and embrace of its role as both a steward of the unique place that is Western North Carolina and as a catalyst for economic and community development.

To position itself as a leader in those efforts, the University will establish an annual leadership tour of the Western North Carolina region and will facilitate an annual conference for regional leaders from the public and private sectors to focus attention and action on strategies for economic and community development.

The University pledges to develop its West Campus, with its unique Millennial Initiative designation, as a national model for building public-private partnerships that are integrated into the academic enterprise and that support the community and the economy. Expansion of academic programs at Biltmore Park will position WCU as a key provider of graduate and professional programs in the Asheville-Hendersonville area. Closer to home, WCU will collaborate with external partners to help Cullowhee and Jackson County grow in ways that preserve their natural beauty and enhance their sense of community.





## INVEST IN OUR PEOPLE

2020 PLAN STRATEGIC DIRECTION 4

WCU IS RECOGNIZED AS ONE OF THE MOST HIGHLY COMPETITIVE AND DESIRABLE EMPLOYERS IN THE REGION.

Excellent faculty and staff are a necessity for the fulfillment of Western Carolina University's mission. In order for the University to succeed, it must take care of its most important resource – its people.

The University will make it an institutional priority to attract, reward, and retain the highest quality employees through measures that positively affect not only compensation, but also other issues that shape the campus work-life environment.

The University will advocate for competitive salary and total compensation packages for its employees and will facilitate professional development for faculty and staff. WCU will embrace leadership development, succession, and stability, and as appropriate, will rally support for issues related to quality of life, all of which will enhance the recruitment, development, and retention of qualified and satisfied faculty and staff.

Western Carolina will focus on developing an environment for faculty and staff members that enhances their personal and professional lives by encouraging opportunities for spousal or partner hiring by regional businesses and institutions; by seeking affordable child care, health care, and housing options; and by cultivating an inclusive and diverse campus community. In addition, the University will partner with appropriate civic leaders in the development and revitalization of Cullowhee and Jackson County to foster a community core around the campus aimed at improving the place that most WCU faculty, staff, and students call home.







## INVEST IN OUR CORE RESOURCES

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### 2020 PLAN STRATEGIC DIRECTION 5

#### WCU'S CORE INFRASTRUCTURE IS SUSTAINABLE AND POSITIONED TO SUPPORT ITS STRATEGIC PRIORITIES.

It is critical that Western Carolina University have sufficient and constantly updated infrastructure to support its mission and vision. Infrastructure is more than bricks and mortar, wires and fiber, water and sewer, and streets and sidewalks. Infrastructure also includes sustainable fiscal practices and enhanced business processes and procedures necessary to ensure the fiscal stability of the University.

WCU will develop a new comprehensive master plan that incorporates anticipated growth in enrollment and that considers the impact that growth may have on our mountain environment and our community neighbors. Sustainability, energy efficiency, green space, and campus safety and security will be as important as location of new buildings, renovation of older facilities, solutions to transportation problems, and meeting the University's backlog of information technology infrastructure needs.

The University will consistently pursue increased effectiveness and efficiency of its campus business processes and, where appropriate and in the best interests of the institution, will implement organizational realignment.







WCU DEVELOPS THE RESOURCES  
AND MARKETS THE VISION TO  
ENSURE ACHIEVEMENT OF ITS  
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES.

Western Carolina's continued emergence as an ambitious institution dedicated to the economic and community development of the region depends on the availability of consistent and robust sources of funding. A critical element of that effort is an ongoing communications strategy designed to ensure that internal and external stakeholders alike are informed about the people, programs, priorities, and progress of the University.

The University will embark upon a comprehensive fundraising campaign with a special emphasis on securing the endowed merit- and need-based scholarships necessary for WCU to consistently recruit and retain strong academically qualified students and to support WCU's commitment to both student access and student success. By 2020, the University will increase the number of research grant and contract applications by 100 percent, the number of grants and contracts received by 50 percent, and the total annual dollar figure awarded by 25 percent.

Enrollment growth also provides new resources for the University. Toward that end, WCU will develop and implement a comprehensive enrollment management program. The University will advocate for tuition policy flexibility for students in bordering states that surround Western Carolina's regional service area, differential tuition rates for high-demand/high-expense programs, and modification or elimination of differential treatment of distance education in the UNC system's funding formula.





# 2020 VISION: FOCUSING OUR FUTURE

## THE STRATEGIC PLAN

STRATEGIC DIRECTION #1  
FULFILL THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS  
OF OUR STATE AND REGION

WCU's faculty, staff, and students together make the University's academic mission paramount.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION #2  
ENRICH THE TOTAL STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Every WCU student's experience reinforces high standards and expectations, incorporates meaningful external engagement, and instills pride in the University.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION #3  
ENHANCE OUR EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS

WCU is recognized as an active partner within the Western North Carolina region, its communities, organizations, and businesses.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION #4  
INVEST IN OUR PEOPLE

WCU is recognized as one of the most highly competitive and desirable employers in the region.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION #5  
INVEST IN OUR CORE RESOURCES

WCU's core infrastructure is sustainable and positioned to support its strategic priorities.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION #6  
GARNER SUPPORT FOR THE VISION

WCU develops the resources and markets the vision to ensure achievement of its strategic priorities.



# STRATEGIC DIRECTION #1

## FULFILL THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF OUR STATE AND REGION

WCU'S FACULTY, STAFF, AND STUDENTS TOGETHER MAKE THE UNIVERSITY'S ACADEMIC MISSION PARAMOUNT.

*Western Carolina University is committed, first and foremost, to fulfilling its academic mission of providing each student a rigorous and relevant curriculum with learning experiences that emphasize knowledge and skills that are durable, flexible, and transferable. WCU is committed to providing an education grounded in a strong set of foundational knowledge and skills combined with specific practical knowledge in content degree areas, the outcome of which is personal, intellectual, and economic enrichment for each student. WCU seeks to ensure educational opportunities that result in graduates who are prepared for success; who are ready to compete in a challenging, changing, and global environment; and who are committed to contributing to the intellectual, cultural, and economic development of our region and state.*

**GOAL 1.1:** *Deliver high-quality academic programs (undergraduate, graduate, and professional) designed to promote regional economic and community development.*

**INITIATIVE 1.1.1:** Undertake a rigorous and inclusive process to prioritize all undergraduate and graduate programs based on universally applied criteria, including quality, regional need, demand, enrollment trends, retention and graduation rates, and alignment with the University mission and the following integrated curricular focus areas: creative arts, education, environment, health, innovation and technology, and recreation and tourism.

**INITIATIVE 1.1.2:** Develop visionary strategic plans for each of the curricular focus areas through inclusive processes to accomplish the following:

- Position and market WCU as the cultural heart of Western North Carolina in the creative arts
- Fulfill WCU's historic and continuing commitment to be the regional leader in teacher education
- Assume regional leadership in the study of the environment and environmental policy
- Position WCU as the premier regional provider of baccalaureate and graduate education in the health professions with an emphasis on culturally sensitive, integrative, and inter-generational health care
- Establish WCU as a hub of innovation, facilitating inter-disciplinary connections among academic programs in such disciplines as business, the sciences, engineering, technology, and entrepreneurship and external collaboration with industry, start-up companies, research institutes, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies
- Advance the recreation and tourism industries of Western North Carolina

**INITIATIVE 1.1.3:** Position WCU as a preferred provider of graduate and professional programs in the greater Asheville-Hendersonville area in fulfillment of its historic commitment to this vital part of the Western North Carolina region.

**INITIATIVE 1.1.4:** Provide access to academic programs at off-campus sites in Western North Carolina within available resources and as dictated by data-based needs analyses.

**INITIATIVE 1.1.5:** Align departments, colleges, and divisions, as appropriate, to support the strategic vision of the University.

**INITIATIVE 1.1.6:** Identify and develop integrated, cross-disciplinary centers/institutes of study and outreach, where appropriate, based on the curricular focus areas.

**INITIATIVE 1.1.7:** Increase the total number of WCU graduates by 25 percent by 2020 to meet the regional need for an educated work force.

**GOAL 1.2:** *Fully integrate into the general education program and into each major and minor at both undergraduate and graduate levels an emphasis on those core abilities expected of all WCU students: to integrate information from a variety of contexts; to solve complex problems; to communicate effectively and responsibly; to practice civic engagement; and to clarify and act on purpose and values.*

**INITIATIVE 1.2.1:** Hire faculty and staff who understand and will contribute to WCU's core educational values, its holistic academic mission, its commitment to outreach and engagement, and the achievement of the institution's strategic priorities.

**INITIATIVE 1.2.2:** Develop and implement effective, faculty-led mentoring programs for students, aided and reinforced by advising and course scheduling in the support units and designed to reinforce the University's core values.

**INITIATIVE 1.2.3:** Incorporate writing and research into all levels of the curricula.

**INITIATIVE 1.2.4:** Ensure that all academic programs incorporate the core abilities detailed in Goal 1.2.

**INITIATIVE 1.2.5:** Incorporate into the formal evaluation of faculty work a consideration of how curricula, pedagogies, and scholarship successfully advance the University learning outcomes.

**GOAL 1.3:** *Ensure that all programs include cross-curricular, experiential, applied, and international/global awareness opportunities for all students.*

**INITIATIVE 1.3.1:** Reduce, and where possible eliminate, bureaucratic and financial barriers to cross-curricular design and team-teaching.

**INITIATIVE 1.3.2:** Incorporate expectations for experiential and applied learning opportunities, including undergraduate research opportunities, in the curricular review process.

**INITIATIVE 1.3.3:** Ensure that meaningful international/global experience opportunities are available to every student, regardless of major, including options to study with international scholars on WCU's faculty, to participate in faculty-led international travel courses, and to study abroad. (See Initiative 2.1.6)

**GOAL 1.4:** *Eliminate barriers to student access through coordinated endeavors with Birth-12 (B-12) and community college partners.*

**INITIATIVE 1.4.1:** Establish a network of regional advisory committees to enhance communication and collaboration among B-12, community college, and WCU faculty and administrators in the areas of 1) curriculum goals and transferability; 2) the benefits of higher education and the best strategies for marketing and recruiting; and 3) admissions and financial aid.

**INITIATIVE 1.4.2:** Review, revise where appropriate, and electronically automate all articulation agreements between WCU and community colleges in the WCU service area with the goal of maintaining high academic standards and facilitating curricular transfer; develop a standard review protocol and timeline.

**INITIATIVE 1.4.3:** Expand opportunities for WCU staff, faculty, and students to visit with B-12 students and community college students (both on- and off-campus) to share information regarding the importance of higher education and the pathways, processes, and programs at WCU.

**INITIATIVE 1.4.4:** Expand coordinated communications and recruiting efforts among B-12, community colleges, and WCU regarding the value of education and affordable avenues for all individuals to access and benefit from it.

**GOAL 1.5:** *Make WCU (the Cullowhee campus and the off-campus site at Biltmore Park in the Asheville-Hendersonville area) a destination for short-term, educationally based programs, activities, and events, including summer school, continuing education, camps, conferences, and personal enrichment opportunities.*

**INITIATIVE 1.5.1:** Pursue a cohesive, consistent, and efficient organizational and policy structure to facilitate short-term, educationally based programs, activities, and events, including review of facilities use policies, University organization, and virtual format possibilities.

**INITIATIVE 1.5.2:** Expand the number of resident and distance summer school offerings for a wide variety of learners, including WCU students, guest students, senior citizens, B-12 students, and the general public; expand summer school enrollment by 25 percent by 2020.

**INITIATIVE 1.5.3:** Expand the number of camps and conferences that WCU offers by 50 percent by 2020.

**INITIATIVE 1.5.4:** Develop and implement a coordinated marketing plan to promote WCU's Cullowhee campus and its programs in Asheville at Biltmore Park as conference destinations. (See Initiative 6.2.1)

**GOAL 1.6:** *Attain a student population that balances the University's commitment to access, its responsibility for student success, and ensures the sustainability of University funding. (See Initiative 6.3.2)*

**INITIATIVE 1.6.1:** Develop data-driven admission strategies (for first-time freshmen, transfer, graduate, and distance students) that

balance the University's aim to increase the academic profile of entering students while continuing to serve the educational role of access as a regional comprehensive university.

**INITIATIVE 1.6.2:** Conduct ongoing program assessment and prioritization and allocate resources to positively affect enrollment.

**INITIATIVE 1.6.3:** Expand efforts to recruit students in programs associated with the curricular focus areas.

**INITIATIVE 1.6.4:** Make the securing of endowed merit and need-based financial aid an institutional fundraising priority. (See Initiative 6.3.6)

**INITIATIVE 1.6.5:** Enhance support for scholarships, graduate assistantships, and student research to attract and retain students who are prepared for the rigors of a Western Carolina educational experience.

**INITIATIVE 1.6.6:** Increase the diversity of the student body and ensure campus resources necessary to support a diverse student body in order to serve the needs of the changing demographics of the region and state and to enhance the educational experience of all students.

**INITIATIVE 1.6.7:** Increase WCU's freshman-to-sophomore retention rate to 80 percent by 2020.

**INITIATIVE 1.6.8:** Increase WCU's six-year graduation rate to 60 percent by 2020.



## STRATEGIC DIRECTION #2

### ENRICH THE TOTAL STUDENT EXPERIENCE

EVERY WCU STUDENT’S EXPERIENCE REINFORCES HIGH STANDARDS AND EXPECTATIONS. INCORPORATES MEANINGFUL EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT. AND INSTILLS PRIDE IN THE UNIVERSITY.

*WCU is committed to working toward the best interests of the region and state through deliberately and consciously considering what it means to educate citizens, a pursuit that encompasses both curricular and co-curricular elements that serve to prepare students to participate in and help create a vibrant, intellectually, culturally, and economically thriving region, state, nation, and world.*

***GOAL 2.1:** Foster a student-centered campus culture that emphasizes academic excellence, personal growth, networking opportunities, and global and social awareness.*

**INITIATIVE 2.1.1:** Ensure that the mission of every academic support and student services unit espouses academic excellence as a primary emphasis.

**INITIATIVE 2.1.2:** Review, and where necessary modify, all student recruitment and promotional materials to include expectations related to academic rigor and standards.

**INITIATIVE 2.1.3:** Align, and where appropriate consolidate, academic support and experiential learning services to ensure consistent, interconnected, and efficiently provided assistance to students.

**INITIATIVE 2.1.4:** Develop and/or formalize mentoring programs that help students develop a sense of personal, intellectual, and professional identity.

**INITIATIVE 2.1.5:** Create leadership and experiential opportunities at the local, regional, national, and international levels, ensuring that all students participate in such opportunities and can document how these learning experiences are interconnected with their program of study. (See Initiative 2.2.4)

**INITIATIVE 2.1.6:** Expand international experiences for all Western Carolina University students through such strategies as increasing study abroad opportunities, developing exchange programs with international universities, recruiting a sizable international student population to WCU, and enhancing global awareness components of existing curricula. (See Initiative 1.3.3)

***GOAL 2.2:** Foster active citizenship among WCU students.*

**INITIATIVE 2.2.1:** Integrate the elements of the Western Carolina University “Community Creed” into institutionally affiliated programs and services.

**INITIATIVE 2.2.2:** As appropriate, include students as full, voting members on campus decision-making committees.

**INITIATIVE 2.2.3:** Increase the number of academic living-learning communities that integrate active, collaborative, and interdisciplinary learning experiences with curricular goals, ensuring necessary logistical and administrative support.

**INITIATIVE 2.2.4:** Provide every student with an opportunity to participate in student-led outreach projects that focus on civic engagement. (See Initiative 2.1.5)

**INITIATIVE 2.2.5:** Create a culture of participating in the democratic process as demonstrated by large percentages of students who are registered to vote and who vote.

**INITIATIVE 2.2.6:** Provide opportunities for students to explore all points of view on various issues and to understand the perspectives of others through civil and informed discourse and debate.

***GOAL 2.3:** Instill pride in the University through more visible recognition and celebration of institutional achievements and traditions.*

**INITIATIVE 2.3.1:** Build and sustain a high-quality athletics program that excites and instills pride among students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends of the University.

**INITIATIVE 2.3.2:** Create and sustain campus traditions that strengthen students’ connection to their University and its surrounding communities.

**INITIATIVE 2.3.3:** Build and sustain consistent celebrations of Cherokee history, culture, and traditions.

**INITIATIVE 2.3.4:** Include in the University’s comprehensive communications plan a focused strategy to celebrate with the institution’s internal and external audiences the accomplishments and achievements of students, faculty, and staff. (See Initiative 6.2.1)

**INITIATIVE 2.3.5:** Ensure that University events are consistently well-advertised to external audiences.

## STRATEGIC DIRECTION #3

### ENHANCE OUR EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS

WCU IS RECOGNIZED AS AN ACTIVE PARTNER WITHIN THE WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA REGION. ITS COMMUNITIES, ORGANIZATIONS, AND BUSINESSES.

*Partnerships with regional businesses and industries, nonprofits, civic organizations, government agencies, communities, and cities are an integral part of WCU’s core mission as a recognized, regionally engaged university. The University’s emphasis on integrated learning experiences, its commitment to engaged scholarship, and its embrace of the institution’s role as both a steward of this unique and special place and a catalyst for economic and community development all demonstrate and reinforce WCU’s commitment to enhancing engagement with external partners.*

***GOAL 3.1:** Strengthen relationships and communication between the University and its external partners.*

**INITIATIVE 3.1.1:** Senior campus leadership will model the institution’s commitment to community outreach and involvement.

**INITIATIVE 3.1.2:** Establish an annual leadership tour of the Western North Carolina region designed to reinforce WCU’s connection with its external constituents and to update University leadership consistently about regional and local priorities.

**INITIATIVE 3.1.3:** Establish the appropriate leadership and organizational structure at WCU to support, coordinate, and facilitate external partnerships and collaborations.

**INITIATIVE 3.1.4:** Create an institutional council with representatives from each division and college to enhance internal communication about external partnerships and engagement, including the sponsorship of an annual inventory of such activities.

**INITIATIVE 3.1.5:** Develop and implement a communications plan that informs Western Carolina University’s external community about University resources (inventoried annually), such as programs, services, facilities, and faculty/staff expertise that are available to the public. (See Initiative 6.2.1)

***GOAL 3.2:** Position the University as a key leader in regional economic and community development efforts.*

**INITIATIVE 3.2.1:** Facilitate an annual conference for regional government, nonprofit, community, education, and business leaders to focus attention and action on regional strategies for economic and community development.

**INITIATIVE 3.2.2:** Develop the West Campus, with its Millennial Initiative designation, as a national model for building, in a rural context, public-private partnerships that are integrated into the academic enterprise and which support community and economic development.

**INITIATIVE 3.2.3:** Develop the programs at Biltmore Park to position WCU as a key provider of graduate and professional programs in the greater Asheville-Hendersonville area along the I-26 growth corridor.

**INITIATIVE 3.2.4:** Work with external partners to facilitate economic and community development in Cullowhee and Jackson County, which form the University’s backyard, and participate in the formation of formalized community leadership for Cullowhee that can serve as the voice of the community as it anticipates growth and development. (See Initiative 4.3.2)

**INITIATIVE 3.2.5:** Seek out and implement internal synergies among outreach efforts and potential partnerships that are focused on economic and community development and consistent with the curricular focus areas identified by the 2020 Commission.

**INITIATIVE 3.2.6:** Facilitate collaborative research and development efforts between WCU and external partners.

***GOAL 3.3:** Align internal processes and reward systems to foster external engagement.*

**INITIATIVE 3.3.1:** Develop models and strategies to formally recognize and reward faculty and staff participation in educationally based external engagement.

**INITIATIVE 3.3.2:** Ensure that all division and departmental personnel processes, including those related to annual faculty evaluation, tenure, promotion, and review, provide faculty and staff the formal opportunity to detail and describe educationally based external engagement activities.

**INITIATIVE 3.3.3:** Promote the University’s support of staff-initiated community service.



# STRATEGIC DIRECTION #4

## INVEST IN OUR PEOPLE

WCU IS RECOGNIZED AS ONE OF THE MOST HIGHLY COMPETITIVE AND DESIRABLE EMPLOYERS IN THE REGION.

*Excellent faculty and staff are prerequisites for the fulfillment of Western Carolina University’s mission. Western Carolina University must therefore advocate for competitive compensation for its employees and facilitate professional development; leadership development, succession, and stability; and, as appropriate, support for issues related to quality of life, all of which will enhance the recruitment, development, and retention of qualified and satisfied faculty and staff.*

### GOAL 4.1: Make salary and total compensation packages an institutional priority in order to attract, reward, and retain the highest quality employees.

**INITIATIVE 4.1.1:** Advocate for the financial resources necessary to offer competitive salaries and compensation packages.

**INITIATIVE 4.1.2:** Develop a regular and recurring process for employee salary review.

**INITIATIVE 4.1.3:** Develop and implement strategies for retaining high-performing employees with competitive salary adjustments and compensation packages within existing policies.

**INITIATIVE 4.1.4:** Develop and implement a program of competitive summer grants to support innovative faculty pursuits within the context of Western Carolina’s mission and values.

**INITIATIVE 4.1.5:** Advocate with other UNC system institutions for a competitive and attractive health benefits plan that is cost-effective for employees and their families.

### GOAL 4.2: Ensure professional development opportunities for all employees.

**INITIATIVE 4.2.1:** Make support for professional development for all employees a fiscal priority at WCU.

**INITIATIVE 4.2.2:** Include in each supervisor’s performance evaluation an assessment of his/her support for and his/her unit’s progress in professional development.

**INITIATIVE 4.2.3:** Ensure appropriate orientation and annual refresher updates for all staff and faculty, as appropriate.

**INITIATIVE 4.2.4:** Ensure that all faculty and staff understand performance evaluation processes and criteria.

**INITIATIVE 4.2.5:** Establish a campus leadership academy to cultivate faculty and staff leaders.

### GOAL 4.3: Work to develop a work-life environment for Western Carolina University employees that enhances their personal and professional lives.

**INITIATIVE 4.3.1:** Develop a network within the University and with regional businesses and institutions to enhance employment opportunities for spousal and partner hiring.

**INITIATIVE 4.3.2:** Partner with appropriate civic leaders in the development and revitalization of Cullowhee and Jackson County, with specific emphasis on developing a community core around the campus aimed at improving the quality of life for faculty, staff, students, and the community. (See Initiative 3.2.4)

**INITIATIVE 4.3.3:** Accommodate flexible work arrangements for staff, where appropriate and possible.

**INITIATIVE 4.3.4:** Facilitate a network of opportunities, where possible, for affordable child care, health care, and housing options for faculty, staff, and students.

**INITIATIVE 4.3.5:** Increase diversity among faculty and staff.

### GOAL 4.4: Adequately support for scholarship and creative activities in support of Western Carolina University’s mission as a regional comprehensive university.

**INITIATIVE 4.4.1:** Establish an organizational structure to accommodate the research, Graduate School, and Millennial Initiative ambitions of the University.

**INITIATIVE 4.4.2:** Ensure appropriate institutional infrastructure to support scholarship and research.

**INITIATIVE 4.4.3:** Increase support for scholarship and creative activities, including funding for reassigned time for scholarship, library support, graduate research assistantships, summer research grants, seed funding, start-up support where appropriate, equipment replacement, and travel for conference presentations.

### GOAL 4.5: Create an environment in which the primary role of faculty as teacher-scholars is recognized and valued.

**INITIATIVE 4.5.1:** Develop and implement integrated faculty workload expectations and policies that facilitate exemplary teaching, scholarly productivity, and public service in alignment with Western Carolina’s commitment to external engagement.

**INITIATIVE 4.5.2:** Provide department heads and deans flexibility within the parameters of fiscal realities in assigning workload to faculty to accommodate significant contributions for such out-of-classroom responsibilities as advising, undergraduate and graduate research supervision and mentoring, and student career development.

**INITIATIVE 4.5.3:** Eliminate redundant and ineffective service obligations and committees across campus.

### GOAL 4.6: Foster an inclusive University community where the contributions of all employees are recognized and valued.

**INITIATIVE 4.6.1:** Establish opportunities that give University staff access to University administration in the governance process.

**INITIATIVE 4.6.2:** Develop a forum that facilitates collaboration among members of the Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, and the Student Government Association on university-wide issues and projects.

# STRATEGIC DIRECTION #5

## INVEST IN OUR CORE RESOURCES

WCU’S CORE INFRASTRUCTURE IS SUSTAINABLE AND POSITIONED TO SUPPORT ITS STRATEGIC PRIORITIES.

*Western Carolina University will ensure a consistently updated infrastructure in support of its mission and vision. Infrastructure is interpreted broadly to include facilities, technology, fiscal practices, and business processes and procedures.*

### GOAL 5.1: Implement sustainable funding models to ensure fiscal stability.

**INITIATIVE 5.1.1:** Eliminate operational dependence on one-time funding for core functions and services.

**INITIATIVE 5.1.2:** Maintain a favorable bond rating.

**INITIATIVE 5.1.3:** Develop and implement processes to identify resources for reallocation and reallocate such resources to areas with demonstrated/potential growth, capacity for revenue generation, and critical strategic need.

### GOAL 5.2: Develop a comprehensive University master plan.

**INITIATIVE 5.2.1:** Charge a task force consisting of representatives of internal and external constituents and supported by an external consultant to develop a comprehensive campus master plan that takes into account such factors as anticipated enrollment growth, the environment, sustainability, energy efficiency, core infrastructure needs, building priority needs, departmental/unit consolidation, technology infrastructure, campus safety and security, green space, transportation, campus design standards, and the integration of the campus with the surrounding community. The comprehensive plan will include the following components:

- A comprehensive facility condition assessment for existing buildings
- A campus sustainability plan that aligns with the UNC Sustainability Policy
- An assessment and prioritization of core infrastructure needs in light of emerging technologies
- An assessment and prioritization of new building needs
- A prioritized plan for addressing repair and renovation needs
- Incorporation of green space throughout the campus
- A plan to consolidate like parts of individual units/colleges where possible
- A campus parking and transportation plan that facilitates access to education sites and includes investment in multimodal options such as bike lanes, greenways, etc.
- A process for allocating and budgeting space as a core resource to maximize space utilization
- A plan to ensure the integration of campus development with the community surrounding the University

### GOAL 5.3: Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of campus business processes to ensure continuous improvement and to realize financial savings.

**INITIATIVE 5.3.1:** Review the use of expendables, including printed documentation, and where reasonable, reduce such usage and transition to digital alternatives.

**INITIATIVE 5.3.2:** Conduct business-flow analyses of all key functions and revise or eliminate unnecessary or redundant business processes and leverage existing enterprise solutions (e.g., Banner, Blackboard, R25, SharePoint, etc.).

**INITIATIVE 5.3.3:** Consolidate and centralize similar operations across campus.

### GOAL 5.4: Sustain and increase information technology capabilities and capacity required to meet the goals of the University.

**INITIATIVE 5.4.1:** Establish and systematize a sustainable funding model for information technology that accommodates operational support, replacements and upgrades, University growth, and strategic initiatives.

**INITIATIVE 5.4.2:** Establish capacity planning, management, and implementation processes to ensure accommodation of mandatory and anticipated information technology needs, including both human resources and technologies (e.g., bandwidth, storage, servers, digital media, software licenses, wireless networking, wired networking, cloud services, etc.).

**INITIATIVE 5.4.3:** Establish a multiyear technology capability planning process that is revisited annually.

**INITIATIVE 5.4.4:** Assess periodically and revise, where necessary, the information technology disaster recovery plan.

### GOAL 5.5: Maintain and improve campus safety systems, capabilities, and infrastructure in support of the University’s strategic priorities.

**INITIATIVE 5.5.1:** Complete and maintain updated emergency response plans and business continuity plans for critical functions of the University.

**INITIATIVE 5.5.2:** Implement sustainable funding models in support of campus safety systems and infrastructure.

**INITIATIVE 5.5.3:** Enhance campus-wide emergency preparedness with ongoing communication and training.

**INITIATIVE 5.5.4:** Sustain and enhance partnerships (e.g., mutual aid agreements, EMS service provision, etc.) with local governments, regional public safety agencies, and health organizations in support of campus and community safety priorities.

**INITIATIVE 5.5.5:** Systematically assess and upgrade technologies (e.g., radio systems, access controls, cameras, etc.) in support of campus safety objectives.



# STRATEGIC DIRECTION #6 GARNER SUPPORT FOR THE VISION

WCU DEVELOPS THE RESOURCES AND MARKETS THE VISION TO ENSURE ACHIEVEMENT OF ITS STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

WCU's continued emergence as an ambitious institution of higher education dedicated to the economic and community development of Western North Carolina depends on the development and cultivation of consistent and robust funding sources and an ongoing communications strategy designed to ensure that internal and external stakeholders are consistently informed about the University and its progress in achieving strategic goals.

*GOAL 6.1: Facilitate a shared understanding of and commitment to the institution's strategic vision among WCU faculty, staff, and students.*

**INITIATIVE 6.1.1:** Create or modify existing orientation messages for new faculty, staff, and students to ensure early introduction to and understanding of the University's strategic vision.

**INITIATIVE 6.1.2:** Align all internal budgeting and annual reporting processes to reflect and reinforce the strategic vision and priorities of the University.

**INITIATIVE 6.1.3:** Ensure consistency among vision messages from all internal sources.

*GOAL 6.2: Facilitate a shared understanding of the institution's strategic vision among the University's external communities.*

**INITIATIVE 6.2.1:** Develop and implement comprehensive and consistent communications and marketing plans designed to fulfill the University's strategic priorities. (See Initiatives 1.5.4, 2.3.4, and 3.1.5)

**INITIATIVE 6.2.2:** Ensure the appropriate leadership and organizational structure necessary to develop and implement comprehensive communication and marketing plans designed to communicate Western Carolina University's strategic vision effectively, concisely, and consistently to all external stakeholders.

**INITIATIVE 6.2.3:** Create a network for regional engagement and statewide advocacy through a mobilized and informed alumni base.

**INITIATIVE 6.2.4:** Develop a process to review periodically the University brand and tailor the marketing message accordingly.

*GOAL 6.3: Maximize and target a balanced and diverse mix of financial resources that will enable achievement of Western Carolina University's strategic vision.*

**INITIATIVE 6.3.1:** Develop and implement a comprehensive enrollment management process that maximizes state appropriations per the formula funding system in a manner consistent with the University's strategic priorities related to access and success, including incremental increases in admission standards.

**INITIATIVE 6.3.2:** Revisit the organizational structure of all campus offices and functions related to enrollment management to ensure lean, robust, and efficient operations. (See Goal 1.6)

**INITIATIVE 6.3.3:** Explore innovative possibilities for revenue generation such as summer revenue opportunities, the initiation of certificate/executive programs, and cooperative education opportunities to reduce dependency on state funding and tuition and fee increases.

**INITIATIVE 6.3.4:** Develop and implement a comprehensive plan to increase significantly WCU's advocacy efforts among elected officials on behalf of University and system priorities.

**INITIATIVE 6.3.5:** Develop and implement an advocacy plan for state/system action on three key market-based issues:

- Tuition policy flexibility (in-state or surcharge) for students in bordering states
- Differential tuition in high-demand/high-expense programs
- Modification/elimination of differential treatment of distance education in the UNC system's funding formula

**INITIATIVE 6.3.6:** Pursue a comprehensive development campaign targeting (See Initiative 1.6.4):

- Gifts at all levels in support of WCU's strategic goals and initiatives
- Particular philanthropic support for endowed merit- and need-based scholarships to enable WCU to recruit and retain the best academically qualified students and to support WCU's commitments to student access and student success
- An increase in the participation and engagement of WCU alumni in University activities and in the number of alumni donors by 50 percent by 2020
- Adequate development and alumni staffing to ensure the campaign's success

**INITIATIVE 6.3.7:** Develop infrastructure for research and sponsored programs, technology transfer, and commercialization consistent with strategic priorities to achieve the following by 2020:

- Increase in the number of research grant and contract applications by 100 percent
- Increase in the number of grants and contracts received by 50 percent
- Increase in the total annual amount of awards received by 25 percent

**INITIATIVE 6.3.8:** Pursue funding resources for development of the West Campus/Millennial Initiative.







FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT

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